

“Threat Level Midnight” // Stained Glass: Nine Windows of Divine Light  
Enneagram Type 6 // God is...With Me?  
Wildwood Mennonite Church // July 22, 2018 // Joe Heikman

**Type Six: The Loyal Skeptic / The Forecaster:**  
...prepared...consistent...practical...dependable...hardworking...

Stained Glass - Nine Windows of Divine Light

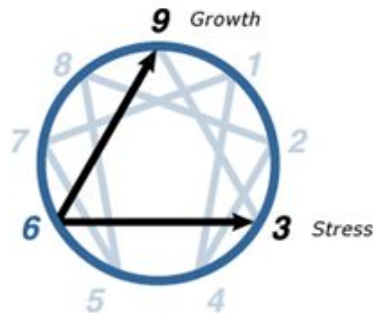
*We learn to know God more fully  
by learning to know ourselves  
and each other more fully*

**Head-Centered**

*Basic Desire:* To be secure.

*The Project:* I maintain love and connection by preparing for whatever may come and relying on the people and things that I know to be certain.

*Gifts of the Six:* commitment, foresight, cooperation, questioning, support, stability, caution...



What is good about fear?

Fear is a negative emotion? At least, it's usually presented that way in our culture: "the only thing we have to fear, is fear itself." We conquer our fears, we face them, we "keep calm and carry on." We even use fear to prove ourselves through thrill-seeking, we mock it through horror movies and haunted houses.

## ***Where is the good in fear?***

The most repeated commandment in the Bible is "Do not fear."

Don't be afraid. I'm afraid that that's a complicated statement for the Type Sixes of the Enneagram. That's the Type that I identify with the most strongly.

And at the core of the Six is this deep-seated insecurity. For me, it's almost always been a social anxiety, worrying about what others will think of me and trying to fit in or not be noticed at all. I played basketball in high school, and I was a decent player. I spent hours and hours practicing, until I was comfortable with the basketball. But in a game, I hated having the ball in my hands. I didn't want the attention to be on me.

And usually, it wasn't. I was a defense and rebounding kind of player. But I remember one moment when I came down with the ball on the defensive end of the court, and all of my teammates sprinted to the other end. I had nobody to pass to. It was just me and the ball, no defender, just 40 feet of open court ahead of me. All I had to do was walk and dribble the ball up the court without bouncing it off my feet. I barely made it. That's what it felt like, anyway. Just panic. What am I doing, this isn't supposed to be me, everybody's watching me, I can't do this, I'm totally out of my element.

I'm pretty sure I made it across half-court without incident. But what a relief to give the ball to someone competent and go back to my role in the background.

That's what it feels like to be a Six every day, for me at least. Everybody's watching, I just know I'm going to screw this up, and everyone will know I'm only pretending to be a competent adult. My first year in university, I was on a bus trip with a choir, and someone sitting near me thought it would be fun to share our most embarrassing moments. And people are going around the circle laughing at their follies, and I'm getting more and more worked up internally. When my turn came, I went with honesty: "I don't have a most embarrassing moment." I still don't. I spend soooo much of my energy trying to avoid embarrassing situations that none have ever happened. And when something embarrassing does happen, I'm ready to instantly deflect and reframe so that nobody else can see my actual embarrassment. I feel shame all the time, but not in the way that would make someone else laugh. Even my ability to laugh at myself and to share vulnerable moments in my speaking, that's all a carefully crafted persona to help me hide and defend my deepest self.

So, tell me again, "Do not be afraid." On the one hand, I wish I could. That would be such a relief. And indeed, there are moments of true intimacy with some people where fear does not get in the way and I am caught up in the joy of truly knowing and being known. Don't be afraid, that sounds wonderful.

But it also sounds more than a little bit like "stop being yourself." For me, and I think most Sixes, "Don't be Afraid" makes about as much sense as "Just Do It."

I can't. It's that simple. I can't turn off my fear, it's just how I experience the world. Fear is a constant companion, sometimes it's a steady diet of "what if" scenarios. Sometimes it's a low-grade, general anxiety about everything and nothing in particular. For me, it usually is present as a constant looking five minutes or five days into the future, forecasting what negative things might happen so that I can be prepared for them. I can't turn that off.

And really, I'm not sure I want to. It's such a core of my identity that I would have no idea who I am without fear. I don't like it, but fear is the path on which I walk through the world, it's my basic motivation. It's what I know.

So that's one of the paradoxes in the life of Sixes--there's this urge to overcome fear, but also this inseparable connection to it.

Honestly, I don't really like being a Six. It's a bad feeling to feel insecure all the time. Nobody looks up to the Cowardly Lion. Oh, the Enneagram books and teachers all say really nice things about the Sixes, how we're loyal and faithful and good citizens. And that's true, but it really feels like they're stretching. The Six stereotype sounds so vanilla, so boring and basic and dull. Like what people say about someone stuck in a situation that they pity... "Ah, you're so, you're such, you're a real trooper. Hang in there, li'l buddy."

To the other Sixes in the room, I'm sorry. I'm not talking about you, I'm talking about how I see myself. Sixes really are loyal and dependable and likeable and responsible, and those things make the world go around. And there's a lot of other stuff to our personalities than the steady-and-reliable stereotypes.

Still, I suspect that you other Sixes also struggle to see the genuine goodness in our personality type.

Throughout this series, one of my goals with these introductions to the nine Enneagram types has been to draw out the positive aspects, to name the image of God in each type. And so we've had themes like "God is Good" for the Ones. "God is Effective" for the Threes, or "God is Sublime" for the Fours. In each of the other numbers, I've found that with their core drives, God is present and so God is revealed in each of those types simply by them being who they are.

I've really struggled to do that for the Sixes. Partly because it's my type, and it's always harder to see God in ourselves than in others. And at least partly because of what I've said about the core of the Six type being this relationship with Fear.

It seems like God is the opposite of Fear, that God is Fearless and Faithful, God is Powerful, that God is the Rock that we cling to in the storm.

And while those are true and good things, it also feels like the opposite of the Six. When I hear those things, it seems like for me to experience God, I need to deny or at least push pause on this core part of who I am. Don't be afraid.

Does that make sense? Oh no, I was really afraid it wouldn't!

So again I ask, where is the good in fear? And more directly, where is the image of God in the fearful Six personality?

Let's unpack that a bit, with the help of some stories.

First, Peter. The story Matt read of [Peter walking on water](#) with Jesus, sort of, that's a classic Six story. It's a dark and stormy night on the lake, and then they see a ghost moving over the water towards them. Genuinely scary situation. And when Jesus calls out to them, "it's me, don't be afraid,"

Peter responds with the forceful skepticism of a Six: “Prove it.” That part was reasonable. The test that he suggested was pretty ridiculous, though. It’s already a frightening situation, but Peter ups the ante by making himself even more vulnerable. “Dare me to get out of the boat.”

The [Enneagram describes Sixes](#) as having a strange “phobic and counter-phobic” dynamic. Sixes often respond to fears by freezing or by backing away and going around, but sometimes we respond with an aggressive defiance. If something scares us, we push back against it. That’s the counter-phobic piece--Sixes can and do fight back, not out of confidence like the Eights, but out of a place of insecurity or perhaps desperation.

That’s what Peter does here: I’m afraid, so I’m going to dare you to challenge me to get out of the boat and join you on this terrifying lake. Okay, Pete, let’s do it!

And so as you know, Peter does it, he actually takes a few steps on the water, and then his fear gets the best of him and he starts to sink. And Jesus catches him and gives him a gentle reprimand, “why did you doubt?”

You long-time church folks have probably heard a sermon or three about Peter’s downfall, how he took his eyes off of Jesus to look at the waves, and so his fear caused him to sink. And that reprimand gives the whole story a negative slant, as Jesus is disappointed with Peter’s lack of faith.

But I wonder if there’s a hint of something else under the surface here, (pun fully intended!) Imagine how Peter told this story to his friends back in the fishing village. My bet is that this was a bragging tale for the ages--“and then I said, Prove it, and he said, “alright then, come on in” and so I did, and I freaking walked on water! I did, I really did, I walked on water, ask James and John, they saw the whole thing!” And John says, “whatever dude, you ended up all wet in the end.” But Peter can’t contain himself: “How many steps did you get, Johnny Boy? I got eight steps *on top of the water*. Eight steps!” Even as a Six, I don’t think this was retold as a cautionary tale of what happens when you get out of the boat... “Eight steps, baby!”

And then there’s also the gentle teasing nickname that Jesus uses for Peter in that moment. Oligopiste. You aspiring Greek scholars, there’s a master’s thesis in that word study for you somewhere. It’s usually translated “Ye of little faith,” but I think there’s a case to be made that it’s actually “the faith of only a few,” as in, you were the only one to get out of the boat, and you totally had this! Having only a little faith was never a problem for Jesus, the mustard-seed planter.

Peter’s fear did not keep him the boat, and I think that counts as a win.

A second story of a Six-ish personality in the Bible is [the story of Esther](#), the Jewish Queen of the Persian Empire. Again, a familiar tale. Young orphaned girl, caught up in some kind of perverse forced-entry beauty pageant to find a new queen for King Ahasuerus. Long story short, the King was impressed with Esther’s beauty and chose her to be his queen. And Esther’s uncle, Mordecai,

inspired and then uncovered a plot by the villain Haman against the Jews, a plan to get the King to sign a law allowing anyone in the Persian empire free reign to kill Jews and take their stuff.

Mordecai told Esther about Haman's plan and begged her to use her influence with the King to convince him to save the Jews. But Esther is scared.

One common expression of Six-ness is to adopt the position of defensive driving on the road of life. Check your mirrors, head on a swivel, hands at 10-and-2. And always look 10-12 seconds ahead so that you can see what's coming and there won't be any surprises.

Most Sixes are excellent forecasters, or at least try to be. We predict the future, or at least the worst-case version of it, so that we can be prepared for it. We're often wrong, like, really wrong--but hey, we predicted the absolute worst so even when we're wrong we're kinda okay with that!

That forecasting is what Esther was doing when Mordecai asked her to take the extermination plot against the Jews to the King.

She knew what was going to happen: the King did not like uninvited guests so he would refuse to acknowledge her and she would be killed. Those were the rules, nothing to be done about it. She could see how the story would end.

But Mordecai insisted, and so Esther did another thing that many Sixes do well: She chose to trust her pillars. Because Sixes are so uncertain in the world, when we do discover something or more often someone who proves to be trustworthy, we attach ourselves to them fiercely.

I find myself doing this constantly. In any given situation, I have my mentors and role models and the people I look to for guidance and affirmation. I'm insecure, but I know how to get ahold of Steve when I need him. Or, I'm worried, but Cedric doesn't look worried, so we're probably okay. Or, I'm out of my depth in this situation, but I know what Pastor Ingrid would probably do so I'll try to do that as best as I can and hope nobody notices that I'm only pretending to be a good pastor. I'm insecure in myself, but I totally trust my teammates. (You know who you are!)

That's what Esther did when she was deathly afraid. She trusted Mordecai. She gathered the Jewish community to pray for her. She drew strength from the maids that surrounded her.

And then she set her face and committed to the path before her: "I will go to the King, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish."

And as you probably know, the King actually did receive her and welcomed her company and eventually heard her story and turned against Haman. He gave the Jews permission to fight back against anyone who attacked them, so that the Jews triumphed over their enemies and gained the favour of the King.

I love that story, because it's not that Esther wasn't afraid, but she was not overwhelmed by the fear and instead accomplished her goals in very Six-like ways. Fear was not a weakness, it actually was a helpful tool preparing her to face the task at hand in the best ways possible.

Now we're getting somewhere.

Another story, from even further back in the Biblical world. It begins outside the Bible, actually. Perhaps you're familiar with the tale of the Enuma Elish, a creation myth of the Babylonians.

Tiamat was the goddess of the salt sea, the symbol of primordial chaos, mother to the first generation of lesser gods. As rebellious young gods are wont to do, her sons turned on Tiamat and her husband Apsu, killing Apsu and trying to capture their throne. So Tiamat sought revenge on her children, taking the form of a terrifying sea dragon and rampaging through the realm of the gods. Until she met Marduk, the storm god of Babylon, who fought off her attack and trapped her in a net before shooting an arrow through her heart. Victory in hand, Marduk cut open the carcass of the terrible beast, and used the two halves of the chaos monster to create the earth and the skies.

So that says a little something about the Babylonian worldview, that their champion killed the chaos monster and built the earth out of it. Chaos was the enemy, and the world was a thing to be beaten into shape, mastered and controlled.

That sounds to me like how a lot of the world approaches fear: face it, master it, and if possible kill it. That sounds like a pretty ideal world for a Six, actually, a world where Chaos is controlled, so that order reigns and everything is predictable and secure. That's always been the promise of Empire, from Babylon to Persia to Rome to England to America: Peace through Strength. Don't be afraid, we have everything under control.

And honestly, that's the story a lot of Christian empires have told as well, don't be afraid, God is in control, peace through God's strength, everything happens for a reason, and there is no chaos only God's great plan. Fear is the enemy, and God has defeated it, so have a little faith (or at least feel guilt about your fear and pretend that you're not afraid).

That's a common story being told from pulpits around the world today. I wonder, though, if that's really the story that the Bible tells?

In the beginning, in the Genesis creation story, as you know, Marduk does not appear. But, surprise surprise, there are echoes of Tiamat. Genesis 1:2 - *"Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters."* That's an image of Tiamat, the chaos of the waters, without form and purpose, only darkness and disarray.

But where the Babylonian gods fought against the chaos, conquered and killed it, what does the Hebrew *Elohim* do? *Elohim* doesn't kill the chaos, but hovers over it, transcends it, speaks into it, and calls forth life out of it. Out of the chaos God calls order, light and darkness, day and night, the sea and dry land, the different divisions of plants and animals. God gives order to life, the necessary rhythms of nature, but I don't see *Elohim* ending the chaos, certainly not killing it as the Babylonians did.

Instead, what does God do? God calls forth humanity, making humans in the image of God, giving them the role of co-creators and gardeners, and calling the whole thing Good.

That's the Genesis image of humanity, not conquering chaos, not even set against it, but living right in the middle of it. There is no control in this image of *Elohim's* Creation. The chaos is not ended--indeed, there seems to be a whole lot of randomness and anarchy built right into the natural world. It is a Wild World out there.

And we have not been given control. Oh we like to pretend that we're in control, that illusion takes a whole lot of willful ignorance to maintain. We are not in control of very much, maybe only the hint of control that comes with tending a garden. And yet, "God saw all that God had made, and it was very good."

And there it is, that's what I've been looking for. The image of God in the middle of chaos. Where is the image of God in the Sixes? Right there, in the middle of fear, not controlling it, not killing it, but living well among it. Gardeners amidst the storm.

Where is the goodness in fear? Well, it takes a certain leap of faith to say this as a Six, but honestly, the goodness is with me! I am the goodness in the middle of chaos.

This week Keri, Sarita, Nate and I were camping in Cypress Hills. On Wednesday night, we found ourselves and our tent smack in the middle of the most ferocious lightning storm I've seen in quite some time, possibly ever. Lightning flashes across the whole sky, 20-30 of them a minute. We could see it coming across the prairies, slowly but with increasing intensity. Keri grabbed the camera and started taking pictures while I went through the worst possible outcomes in my mind.

By the time the rain started to reach us, the kids were mostly asleep and we'd packed everything up and headed into the tent ourselves. And I'd decided that the biggest realistic threat to our safety was baseball-sized hail. Which, when the rain really started to pound against the tent, seemed like a distinct possibility. By the time Keri asked if we should wake the kids and make a run to our van, I'd already ruled that out. The safest path was to stay put, and if the hail started to come down, for each of us to cover one of the kids with our bodies and pull as much of the sleeping bags and mats over our heads as we could. Any other action would likely be more dangerous than helpful.

Thankfully, it never came to that, and the storm moved on. And I eventually came down from the adrenaline rush. I was ready to go! Totally focused, primed for action, sensors out and shields up. :) And honestly, even though I have no way to know how close we were to actual danger, my Six-ness had prepared us well for that moment. We had purchased a solid, well-researched tent. I was aware of the surroundings and had a pretty good idea of where we were vulnerable. I had chosen the best possible partner a Six could want in a crisis!

And through it all, I was cool and collected, maybe not totally rational in an objective way, but totally functional.

Turns out that all my preparations and practice for worst-case scenarios makes me actually a decent guy to have around in a real crisis. (At least, some kinds.)

What's good about fear? I am. You want someone like me in your corner. I know how to survive in the midst of chaos, of a certain kind anyway. I'm prepared for most scenarios. I know what we're about to face. I know where the exits are. I've mapped out a safe way through. And I'll never abandon you in harms way.

If you're a Six, I'm betting that's true for you as well. And I want you on my team!. In a truly chaotic and anxiety-filled world, Sixes know how to behave and how to not be overcome by the chaos. At our best, we have excellent coping skills, and we are aware of the compulsion for security and how to manage that pull.

Does that make all of our fears worthwhile? I don't know. I do know that fear brings focus and awareness. It cultivates humility and a realistic perspective on the world. It can enhance healthy skepticism, it brings up good conflict and vulnerability, it reveals strength and stability. All of those things have downsides, but the darkness doesn't cancel out the light.

Take Peter's story. He's the biggest coward in the boat. He's most famous for totally denying his relationship with Jesus when it came right down to it. And yet, his fear didn't keep him in the boat. Sixes have as much courage as anyone else, and we know how to use it. When the time comes to get out of the boat, we know how to get out of the boat! Each step of the day is an act of living with fear, so fear is familiar to us instead of paralyzing. Okay, not all the time. But the potential is there for us to call on when we really need it.

Or take Esther's story. By the biblical account, she was afraid for her life, and it doesn't sound like that ever left her. And that fear was legitimate, and her awareness of that led her to a carefully considered plan of action. She chose well the pillars that supported her, and she had cultivated those dependable relationships. She didn't rush in, she used her strengths of hospitality and seduction to woo the King into agreeing with her. And in the end, her fears did not hold her back but instead compelled her to create a safe place for others.



That's what Sixes do at their best. They not only navigate their own fears in healthy ways but they become havens and sources of strength for the others in their lives. They want the world to be secure, so they create safe places for others. They wish the world was trustworthy, so they become trustworthy. They want the world to be less chaotic, so they live with purpose and intention. They long for people and institutions and ideas that are solid, so they give their lives in loyalty and service to be faithful friends and church members and to build solid organizations and sound theology and policies.

We may not be as much fun as the Sevens or as successful as the Threes or even as helpful as the Twos, but you will find safety with us. Not because we control the chaos and overcome the fear, but because we ourselves are a source of safety for you.

And that, my fellow Sixes, that is the image of God *in* us. It's not that we are fearful and God is faithful. It's that we are fearful *and* faithful, and *that* is God with us. And when we lean into our true, fearful selves, we will find that we are the shelter in the storm, for others, and even for ourselves. Not by denying our identity or by defeating our fears, but by being ourselves in the middle of our fears.

And that's true not only for Sixes but for all people.

As a prayer practice for Sixes, [Chris Heuertz](#) suggests the practice of silence:

*To keep distance from their anxiety, typical Sixes avoid silence. Already mistrusting of themselves, they don't want to fall deeper into their fears where the silence is deafening and only amplifies their inner distress. But when Sixes engage silence, something happens--they hear the truth about who they are: strong and resilient heroes and sheroes. Occupying silence with their courage allows for Sixes to participate in the ways that silence cleanses them of doubt, eases their worries, and quiets their suspicions. Silence heals the fractured strength of Sixes when they must up the audacity to engage it with their whole self. Engaging silence validates the daring valor that the panicky cognizance of Sixes tries to stifle.*

*A sign of growth for Sixes is the transformation of their fearful self-doubt to audacious self-confidence. When this transformation takes place, Sixes become a source of grounded faith rooted in their tenacious fortitude.*

~ [The Sacred Enneagram](#) by Chris Heuertz

Audacious self-confidence and tenacious fortitude. Are we up for that? I don't know if I am, but I can trust those who say that it's possible, and I can imagine getting there together.